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SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

May 08, 2003

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 2236 - PRIORITY)  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV  
Captions: None  
Subject: UAE LEADERSHIP RESPONDS TO AMBASSADOR'S URGING OF  
REFORM AT CONTROVERSIAL UAEG-FUNDED ZAYID CENTER FOR  
COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP  
Ref: None

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 02236

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: DCM RSO P/M ECON AMB

DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA  
DRAFTED: POL:STWILLIAMS  
CLEARED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT

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PP RUEHC RUEHEE RUEKJCS RHEHNSC RUEAIIA RHEFDIA  
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DE RUEHAD #2236/01 1281254  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9851  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCJACC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//POLAD/CCJ2/CCJ5// PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//OSD/NESA//  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 002236

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/13  
TAGS: PREL PGOV TC  
SUBJECT: UAE LEADERSHIP RESPONDS TO AMBASSADOR'S URGING OF  
REFORM AT CONTROVERSIAL UAEG-FUNDED ZAYID CENTER  
FOR COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

REF: 02 Abu Dhabi 4712

¶1. (U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba  
for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: As a result of the Ambassador's  
interventions with the UAE leadership, the Zayid

Center for Coordination and Follow-up (ZCCF), a UAE-funded institution which has drawn fire for its sometimes noxious and intolerant views, is set to be placed under new management. This will be welcome news to many in the United States who have grown alarmed over the ZCCF's embrace of hateful rhetoric, its publication of virulently anti-Semitic literature and its promotion of fringe speakers, who while billed as "researchers" or "experts," frequently pander to the lowest common denominator's taste for base racism and conspiracy theories. In a May 6 meeting, MFA Minstate Hamdan told the Ambassador that as a result of her expressions of concern -- including a two-page letter outlining our serious reservations with the ZCCF's policies -- Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khalifa will soon shift supervision of the ZCCF from its current sponsor to the highly respected Center for Documentation and Research, which is attached to the office of President Zayid. END SUMMARY.

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AMBASSADOR'S DIALOGUE WITH MFA MINSTATE ON  
INCREASINGLY CONTROVERSIAL ZCCF BOOKS AND SPEAKERS  
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¶3. (C) In 2002, the Ambassador began a quiet dialogue with MFA Minstate Hamdan bin Zayid in which she voiced concerns about the controversial Zayid Center for Coordination & Follow-up (ZCCF). By way of background, the Center was established by a decree from the UAE cabinet in 1997 and reports to both the UAE Government and the Arab League, though it is funded entirely by the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The brain child of UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Shaykh Zayid's second eldest son, the often erratic and sometimes bibulous Sultan bin Zayid, the ZCCF in its formative years attracted many prominent speakers, including former President Jimmy Carter, former VP Al Gore and former Secretary of State James Baker. However, over the

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last 18 months, and particularly since the 9/11 terror attacks, the ZCCF has adopted an especially harsh tone, often crossing the line into anti-Semitism.

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TROUBLED CENTER REFLECTS ERRATIC BEHAVIOR OF  
PATRON SHAYKH SULTAN BIN ZAYID  
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¶4. (C) We reported last year (reftel) on the ZCCF's increasingly regrettable choice of speakers, commenting that it seemed to reflect the spotty behavior of its patron, Sultan bin Zayid, who has been known to lash out publicly against the U.S., absent coordination with other UAE policymakers. Sultan reportedly had difficulty believing that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by Arabs and by early 2002, had withdrawn almost completely from public life and resumed his addiction to alcohol and drugs. Among the more questionable speakers hosted by the ZCCF at the time was fabled French "intellectual" Thierry Meyssoun who told a packed audience that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by the CIA/FBI. In the summer of 2002, the ZCCF sponsored a conference on "semitism" during which remarks attributed to Center employees and speakers denying the Holocaust were picked up by the international press and became a source of alarm to American Jewish organizations. Attention was drawn to the ZCCF's publication of books such as "The Zionist Movement and its Animosity to Jews" and "Al Buraq Wall, Not Wailing Wall."

15. (C) Not long after Meyssoun took the podium at the ZCCF, the Ambassador approached Hamdan and told him that the Embassy had decided not to recommend the Center to visiting officials (both current and former) and American academics. The British Embassy told us they had similarly decided against recommending the ZCCF. Hamdan readily acknowledged that the ZCCF had become a source of embarrassment to the UAE and noted the irony that an institution bearing his father's name was entirely against Zayid's longstanding policy of tolerance and respect for different faiths.

16. (C) Last month, the Embassy's Public Affairs Office received an inquiry from the Divinity School at Harvard University. Harvard's acceptance of a generous gift from Shaykh Zayid to establish a chair for Islamic Religious Studies had come under fire from faculty members and students because of the ZCCF's promotion of intolerant, noxious and racist views, particularly on the Center's website. Harvard queried us on whether the ZCCF was UAE-funded. We responded that while the institution is funded by the UAE, it does not necessarily reflect the views of the UAE or Shaykh Zayid personally.

17. (C) The Ambassador informed Shaykh Hamdan of Harvard's inquiry and again pressed him to take action soon before Harvard felt compelled to reject Shaykh Zayid's offer of a chair. She suggested cleaning up the website and changing the Center's name (i.e. removing Zayid's name) would be a good first step. Hamdan was visibly angered that the ZCCF's antics had forced Harvard to reconsider the acceptance of the endowment and at the damage this would do to Shaykh Zayid's reputation. Hamdan promised to take the issue directly to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khalifa bin Zayid. The Ambassador followed-up with a formal letter to Hamdan outlining our concerns about the ZCCF and noting that "a brief overview of the Center's website reveals the use of inflammatory language, a negative focus on Judaism, a blurring of the distinction between the Jewish faith, Zionism and the Israeli government, as well as the employment of classic anti-Semitic terminology." She commented that while "we know the Center does not reflect the view of Shaykh Zayid or the Government, that distinction is neither understood nor appreciated by many in the United States. Indeed, many in the U.S. take the view that if a government wholly funds an organization, that government is responsible for the organization's behavior."

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HAMDAN: CENTER WILL BE PLACED UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT  
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18. (C) On May 6, Hamdan told the Ambassador that Crown Prince Khalifa had agreed that the ZCCF was a source of embarrassment and had decreed that quick action should be taken. Hamdan said the ZCCF would soon be moved from under Sultan's sponsorship to the highly respected Center for Documentation and Research, which is attached to the President's Office and is under the overall supervision of Zayid's office director, Mansour bin Zayid. A ZCCF employee told us later that day that orders had already been given "from the UAE leadership" to remove all anti-Semitic material from the Center's website.

19. (C) Comment: It is regrettable that the ZCCF has tarnished the name and reputation of Shaykh Zayid, a leader whose tenure has seen the

integration into the UAE of individuals from scores of different nationalities and faiths. Zayid has prided himself on having fostered the UAE's tolerance and openness. It is heartening to see that the leadership is now moving decisively to correct the damage done by the ZCCF. We will continue to track this issue closely to assure that the current momentum does not flag. End Comment.

WAHBA